

Airborne Laser flies during Kodak Balloon Fiesta

Reported by Directed Energy Directorate and Sandra Carol-Allen

KIRTLAND AFB, N.M. — Among the nearly 900 hot-air balloons that floated over the New Mexico desert in Albuquerque, one reflected an Air Force acquisition program, managed by the Airborne Laser System (ABL) Program Office.

This is the second year ABL has been highlighted at the Kodak Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, advertised as the most photographed event in the world.

An illustration stretched across the multi-colored balloon shows ABL in action; a beam of light being fired from a jumbo jet, destroying a missile.

The nine-day fiesta, featured 898 balloons from 20 countries and more than a million spectators. According to fiesta officials, the Albuquerque event attracted about 20 percent of the total known balloons worldwide.

The ABL director, Col. Mike Booen said the annual balloon fiesta is an ideal opportunity to highlight the program as an effective deterrent to a theater ballistic missile attack.

Booen explained that several of the technologies that made ABL possible were developed in New Mexico. He added that the production of ABL is one-third completed and is within 1 percent of the schedule and budget. @



FULL OF HOT AIR? – Framed against the White Sands Monument at White Sands N.M., a balloon representing the Airborne Laser Program (ABL) lifts off. The balloon made a practice flight in September in preparation for the Kodak Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta that took place in Albuquerque October 2.